

Hitchin Town 2, Wycombe Wanderers 1

IF YOU don't fire in any shots, then you won't score goals. And that, in a nutshell is why Wycombe Wanderers lost their Berger Isthmian League game 2-1 at Hitchin on Saturday. Against Oxford City previously the Wanderers banged in shot after shot and scored. Incredibly at Hitchin they just failed to shoot, hence no real goals, for the one they did get was a rebound off Dylan Evans.

Unfortunately being shot-shy is not a new affliction for the Wanderers this season. True they were without their leading marks-men (Atkins 13 and Long 12) but Hitchin must have been truly amazed by the lack of firing power of their visitors.

The Wanderers made a bad start on an icy day. Hitchin kicked with the wind

and within two minutes forced a corner. Harthill floated it over the box, John Maskell left his goal, but failed to contact the ball, and although John Priestley partly cleared, Mick Grafton forced the ball over in a goalmouth scramble.

Wycombe grabbed three corners in next to no time, but were almost caught out when Bill Baldry rattled an indirect free kick against their cross bar.

Wycombe forced three more abortive corners before Hitchin almost increased their lead from a free kick after 28 minutes. From the kick Steve Hodge took three Wycombe defenders with him leaving Paul Giggle to go close with a header.

At this stage, the Hitchin midfield men, although having less of the ball, made more use of it than Wycombe.

But the Wanderers managed to level after 33 minutes. Even then they did not have to shoot. Terry Scott made a good run, keeper Dick Bradshaw failed to hold the ball, and Steve Gear, trying to slam the ball away, banged it onto Dylan Evans' foot for the rebound to go into the net. Evans could at least be praised for following up Long's work.

For the rest of the half it was much ado about nothing and so was the early part of the second period.

NO GIGGLE THIS

Then things went wrong again for Wycombe after 57 minutes. Keith Mead let the ball run when it could have easily been cleared and a corner was given away needlessly. Harthill swung the kick over, Hodge flick-headed it towards the far post and Paul Giggle had the simplest of tasks to head home.

It might have been a bit of a seasonal gift for Hitchin, but it was no giggle for the Wanderers.

And this was especially so when it has to be stated that for the rest of the game the ball rare-

ly crossed into their half, so much was their superiority.

With Mark Judd brought on for Les Reed after 65 minutes, they continually slammed long balls down the middle and these were bread and butter to the Hitchin defence.

CORNERS...

And during this period Wycombe won 12 corners, yet only once did they threaten danger to Hitchin, a back-heeler from Howard Kennedy.

Bill Baldry, the Hitchin No. 5 was booked for persistent fouling after 80 minutes and in the last minute Mick Holifield nearly saved a point for Wycombe, a point they would hardly have deserved because of their lack of shooting.

In all Wycombe had 21 corners against four for Hitchin and yet finished on the losing side. The Wanderers had the skills, but where was the application?

End of Christmas term report — the Wanderers, as they have shown against teams like Enfield, can do much better than this. Maybe the Hitchin flop was just a Christmas hang-over. Let us hope so.

SUPREMELY important to Wycombe Wanderers' finances — even if for no other reason — is the scheduled meeting of the Blues with fellow Berger Isthmian Leaguers Barking at Loakes Park tomorrow, in the FA Trophy competition.

Confident Barking, who recently met Aldershot in the FA Cup tourney, are an attacking force with a high-rate scoring performance.

Goal-shy Wycombe will need to get back on target if they are again to topple the team they beat for league points earlier in the season, away from home.